

Student fee boost looms as Cal State board votes on budget

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(11-14) 04:00 PST Los Angeles -- The California State University Board of Trustees is expected to approved a \$4.8 billion budget request Wednesday that could increase student fees 10 percent next year, and the University of California's governing board is expected to follow suit with a possible increase of 7 percent.

The CSU fee boost is contingent on whether the governor and Legislature provide \$73 million to make the fee increase unnecessary.

The UC Board of Regents will vote Thursday on a \$18.1 billion budget request from the state and could impose the 7 percent fee increase if Sacramento doesn't provide an additional \$70.5 million to cover the tuition increase.

The actions give Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, who sits on the governing boards of both university systems, a platform for proposing a limit on fee increases that would be based on the rate of inflation.

"If we allow this to continue, if the student fees are allowed to increase ... California will abandon the public education notion of the university," Garamendi said at a news conference Tuesday. "It is a wrongheaded direction for California to be going."

He said that fees have been rising faster than the income of Californians and he wants the governing boards to approve his resolution in January to limit them in the future.

Garamendi said that if the Legislature does not provide the money to make up for fee revenue, the universities will have to find savings in areas such as executive salaries, to avoid raising student fees dramatically.

Fees have nearly doubled at both universities since 2002. Most recently, the 23 campuses of the California State University system raised fees by 10 percent to about \$3,521 annually this year, and the 10-campus University of California system increased the cost for undergraduates by 9.7 percent to about \$7,494. The figures do not include expenses such as room, meals and books.

Brad Hayward, a UC spokesman, said the regents have the final say and will give Garamendi's proposal full consideration.

But, he said, "If the state cannot provide that level of funding, we would need to be looking for student fee increases."

Gregory Cendana of the UC Student Association said that he is not seeing an increase in quality or services with his rising fees. He said he has to work 35 hours a week in two jobs and will graduate with \$21,000 in debt.

"I'm tired of paying higher fees when I still have to sit on the floor of my classes," he said.

In another matter, UC Provost Rory Hume told the regents Tuesday that he would be downsizing the UC office of the president in addition to looking for more efficient ways to conduct business.

Hume said in an internal memo sent to employees that he will be asking for a 10 percent cut in all departments in the UC system's headquarters, and warned that there would also be layoffs next year.

"The office of the president must become smaller in size, more focused in its mission, and more customer-oriented in its culture," Hume wrote.

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